

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY AIRCRAFT PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 106861 TOSEC 110558

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 3888 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN ATHENS
BAGHDAD DAMASCUS JIDDA KUWAIT LONDON PARIS STUTTGART TEHRAN TEL
AVIV USUN CIA DIA USCINCEUR CINCUSNAVEUR COMSIXTHFLT CTF SIX
ZERO CTF SIX ONE CTF SIX TWO CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO FOSIF ROTA
SPAIN FICEURLANT NORFOLK 2 MAY QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3888

STUTTGART FOR ELG

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION MAY 2: RISING INSECURITY THREATENS
POLITICAL PROCESS

REF: BEIRUT 3884 (DTG 011105Z MAY 76)

1. RESIDENTS IN SEVERAL PARTS OF BEIRUT LOST CON-
SIDERABLE SLEEP LAST NIGHT AS LONG-RANGE ARTILLERY
DUELS MIXED WITH SMALL-ARMS FIRING PUNCTUATED HOURS
UP TO MIDNIGHT AND AGAIN BEFORE DAWN THIS MORNING.
AFTER SUBSIDING BRIEFLY AFTER DAYLIGHT TODAY,
EXCHANGES OF FIRING FROM WEAPONS OF VARYING CALI-
BER ARE AGAIN AUDIBLE AS OF MID-MORNING. MOST OF
FIGHTING IS IN PORT AREA. ACCORDING TO TWO SEPARATE
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SOURCES, LEFTISTS/REJECTIONISTS LAUNCHED AN OFFEN-

SIVE LAST EVENING AGAINST KATAEB POSITIONS IN PORT. SOURCES ALSO REPORT THAT UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS YESTERDAY SHOT AT CAR OF ONE OF SYRIAN COLONELS ON JOINT MILITARY COMMITTEE, AND THIS MAY HAVE SPARKED SYRIAN-INSPIRED RETALIATION AGAINST LEFTISTS. (THE COLONEL WAS NOT IN CAR AT THE TIME AND IS UNHURT.) UPSHOT IS THAT CEASEFIRE BEING INCREASINGLY IGNORED THROUGHOUT THE CAPITAL. THE JOINT TRUCE COMMITTEE MET YESTERDAY UNDER KARAME AND IS TRYING TO GET ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS AND CLASHES TO STOP. SIGN OF ITS FRUSTRATION, HOWEVER, IS FACT THAT IT DOES NOT PLAN TO MEET AGAIN UNTIL DAY AFTER TOMORROW.

2. THE ESCALATED FIGHTING IS CAUSING MANY TO WONDER IF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL BE HELD MAY 8. VIOLENCE IS CURRENTLY AT LEVEL THAT WOULD MAKE SECURITY ALONG "GREEN LINE" NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE IF SESSION WERE HELD TODAY, AND AFFORTS TO END FIGHTING SO FAR APPEAR INEFFECTUAL AGAINST POLARIZATION OCCURRING. SINCE SESSION IS STILL NEARLY A WEEK AWAY, THIS IS NOT YET SEEN AS INSUPERABLE PROBLEM, BUT CONCERN ABOUT FEASIBILITY OF MAY 8 DATE IS BEING EXPRESSED BY MORE THAN ONE OF OUR CONTACTS.

3. ON ASSUMPTION THAT SESSION WILL MEET AS SCHEDULED, THE SEARCH FOR A COMPROMISE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE GOES ON. INITIATIVE IS STILL IN HANDS OF SPEAKER ASAAD. HE REPORTEDLY INTENDS TO APPROACH JUMBLATT ON ONE SIDE AND THE KATAEB ON THE OTHER TO SEE IF AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED ON A NAME.

4. ADDING TO GENERAL TENSION IS STILL-UNSOLVED CASE OF EDDY CHAMOUN, EX-PRESIDENT CHAMOUN'S NEWPHEW, WHO WAS KIDNAPPED BY UNKNOWN ELEMENTS DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY (REFTEL). HE HAS NOT BEEN FOUND. FEAR IS WIDESPREAD THAT HE IS DEAD. IF THIS TURNS OUT TO BE TRUE, CHRISTIAN RETALIATION OF SOME KIND WOULD LOOM AS MAJOR POSSIBILITY.

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